

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers February 2, 2006

Michigan News

11th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit

Use this opportunity to register for the annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit that will be held on February 28 – March 1, 2006 at the Lansing Sheraton Hotel. We expect in excess of 300 attendees and there's still room for exhibitors. For additional information please link to http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504-106853--,00.html

NETS Feature

Make Safety A Winning Message This Super Bowl Sunday

Super Bowl Sunday is one of America's biggest and most entertaining national sporting events. It's a day when friends and families gather to socialize and watch the big game. Sadly, it is also one of the nation's most dangerous days on the roadways due to impaired driving.

...More http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/020106_superbowlfeat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

NETS Launches Employer Guidebook To Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create the 32-page Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes. The guidebook offers useful information to help employers design an effective driver safety program in their workplace. It features a 10-Step program outlining what an employer can do to improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. The document includes success stories from employers who have benefited from effective driver safety programs. For more information visit http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=11845

NETS National Safety Workshop

Employers Best Practices for Roadway Safety Workshop, March 1st in Baltimore focuses on the use of the NETS 10-Step program and spotlights organizations that are the best practitioners of this multi-step process to reduce their crash risk and keep their employees safe on the road. Case studies will be presented to quantify ROI. To register visit, <http://www.trafficsafety.org/work06/info.asp>

Scottsdale Increases Highway Photo Enforcement Program

The city of Scottsdale has used photo enforcement since 1997, and has since begun a test program on a 7.8-mile stretch of the Loop 101 Freeway on January 22, 2006. The goal is to reduce speeding and lower collisions. The demonstration program on the Loop 101 Freeway is the first use of photo enforcement equipment on a freeway in Arizona and is believed to be the first fixed-site photo enforcement program on a freeway in the nation. For the first 30 days of the program, the city is sending warning notices to drivers who exceed the 76 mph threshold. For more information visit <http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/photoradar/>

Multitasking Driving Calls For High Tech Solutions

Think cell phones are the only gadgets in the car causing bad driving? Think again. MP3 players, satellite radio, personal digital assistants, DVD players and mapping tools are quickly becoming common accoutrements of the modern car. And for some that means drivers have more buttons, keypads and click-wheels to twiddle with while navigating the road. Safety concerns have resulted in regulation and legislation, but voice activation is also becoming a viable solution for some automakers. Read the full article at http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9595_22-6029403.html

New Report Examines Traffic Safety Issues Of The Future

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has released its final report from a workshop that examined national long-term traffic safety research needs, with a special emphasis on identifying gaps in existing research plans. The workshop, cosponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, identified nearly 30 research areas and created more than 40 problem statements. For more information visit <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/FuturesReport.pdf>

Industry Experts Predict The Year Of GPS

Experts are predicting that consumer and law enforcement's use of Global Positioning System technology will surge this year. For example, Verizon Wireless launched a GPS tracking system for parents to track their teenagers via cell phones. New Mexico's Bernalillo County has implemented a GPS program that uses cell phones and ankle bracelets to track repeat violent offenders who might violate restraining orders. The benefits and uses of GPS seem endless. Read the full article at <http://www.realtysecurity.com/Releases/GPS%201-26-06.htm>

Arizona Lawmaker To Punish Careless Motorists

An Arizona state lawmaker wants to punish drivers who have their vehicles stolen after they forget to take their keys with them. The bill would allow insurance companies to reject claims if they can prove the keys were left anywhere in the vehicle, not just the ignition. The bill also would allow insurers to refuse to pay for items stolen from vehicles in similar circumstances. Arizona ranks second nationally in terms of the rate of auto thefts, and it is estimated that 20 percent of stolen vehicles were unlocked at the time.

Small Cars, Rear Wheel Drive To Make A Comeback?

The recent North American Auto Show may have renewed the spotlight on small cars. With the rise of the SUV, small cars have taken the back seat in the auto industry. Now as younger drivers make more of an impact on the market, small cars are expected to make a comeback. The show also highlighted a possible return of rear wheel drive. Read the full articles at <http://www.autonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060123/SUB/60120049/1003/newsletter02&refsect=newsletter02>

Survey: Drivers Neglect Tire Safety

According to a recent Farmers Insurance Group Survey, many drivers ignore one of the most important components of their vehicles: their tires. The survey found that 29 percent of drivers do not check the treads on their tires more than once a year, nor do they have their wheels aligned or balanced more than once every two years. By failing to properly care for their tires, drivers are increasing their risk of tire failure in the event of a crash.

Sharing The Road Safely

It is a common misconception that when a large truck and passenger vehicle are involved in a crash, the trucker is at fault. The trucking industry claims that most crashes involving trucks are caused by other vehicles. The view is shared by law enforcement and reinforced by statistics that show cars are

responsible for causing most of the wrecks involving cars and trucks. Now there is a push to educate drivers about sharing the road safely with large trucks. For more information visit <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?SMContentIndex=3&SMContentSet=0>

Coming To A Car Near You: Your Computer

Automakers and car-accessory companies are joining forces to make the PC the next must have car accessory. These products would be designed to allow drivers to do everything they can do on a desktop PC -- word processing, Internet surfing, email—while sitting in the driver's seat. The Screens can be mounted anywhere from near the dashboard to the back seat. However, for safety reasons, it is expected that many functions of the new car PCs with screens in the front seat work only when the vehicle is parked and stopped. Read the full article at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/06026/644908.stm>

Model Helps Licensing Agencies Driver Crash Rate

Kentucky data shows that a significant number of drivers are repeatedly involved in crashes. A new study developed a crash prediction model that can be used to estimate the likelihood of a driver being at fault for a crash occurrence. The study considered such crash predictors as the driver's total number of previous crashes, citations accumulated, the time gap between the latest two crashes, crash type, and demographic factors. The model is anticipated to help licensing agencies to more actively monitor the likelihood of a driver to be at fault in a crash.

Authors: S. Chandraratna, N. Stamatiadis, and A. Stromberg Source: Accident Analysis Prevention

Failure To Remove Ice, Snow From Vehicle Could Illegal In PA

Legislation was introduced by a Pennsylvania state lawmaker that would fine drivers for failing to remove ice and snow from vehicles. The proposed bill would permit police to pull over drivers whose vehicles are not cleared of snow and ice. The legislation gained momentum following the death of a woman driver who was instantly killed when ice fell off the roof of a tractor-trailer. The truck driver continued driving, unaware of what happened and has since not been identified.

Legislation In New Jersey Gets Tough On Cell Phone Use, Distracted Driving

New legislation in New Jersey would allow law enforcement to stop motorists who fail to use hands-free devices while operating a motor vehicle, or who engage in other unsafe activities while operating a motor vehicle. The bill would change the offense of using a wireless telephone while driving from a secondary to a primary offense, and would levy a \$100 fine on any motorist who engages in other inherently distracting activities that interfere with a driver's ability to operate a vehicle. For more information visit

http://politics.nexcess.net/pressrelease/2005/12/assemblyman_john_s_wisniewski.html

Can Our Cars Make Us Sick?

According to a new study, chemicals that settle as dust and film on floors and windows of cars and trucks, especially in hot weather, are found at levels that could pose health problems. The study used samples from randomly selected 2000-2005 model year cars and trucks made by 11 manufacturers. Researchers found levels of the chemicals up to five times higher than is typical in homes and offices, according to the report by the Ecology Center. The Center is now urging car companies to use less-toxic alternatives. Read the full article at

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060112/NEWS06/601120488/1014/BUSINESS01>

Traffic Reports Go High Tech

When it comes to traffic reports, commuters have more options than ever before. Decades after radio stations put spotters in helicopters, new methods of gathering and disseminating traffic data are emerging. These new and improved methods combine roadside sensors, automobile navigation systems, and wireless connections to provide real-time customized traffic information. Read the full article at

http://www.boston.com/business/personaltech/articles/2006/01/16/traffic_reports_without_choppers/

Virginia's Information System Reaches Milestone

After only 10 full months of operation, Virginia's 511 traffic and travel information phone system received its 1 millionth call since the statewide launch in February 2005. The system updates callers and website visitors with information about road construction, traffic and weather conditions, traffic incidents, transit information, lodging, food, gas and more. The service is available 24 hours a day by dialing 5-1-1 or by visiting www.511Virginia.org. The service earned a reputation as being the statewide source of travel information and was accessed by Virginia residents and visitors alike. For more information visit <http://www.pbsj.com/Press/Releases/511Virginia/index.asp>

O'Neill To Retire From IIHS

Brian O'Neill, the outspoken 20-year president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, has announced his retirement. O'Neill's influence extends to laws governing teen driving, drunken driving and other behavioral issues. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2006-01-24-oneill-usat_x.htm

Work-Life:

Motorcycle Injuries, Deaths On The Rise

In 2004, an estimated 76,000 riders were injured and a confirmed 4,008 died in motorcycle crashes, compared with 57,000 injuries and 2,320 deaths in 1994, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). While there are more riders on the roads than before, statistics show sharp increases in deaths and injuries per mile driven. The numbers are particularly dramatic among riders over age 40 - 1,847 died in 2004, compared with 541 in 1994. For more information visit <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?SMContentIndex=23&SMContentSet=0>

Teen Drivers Are Killing Other People More Than Themselves

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released a new analysis that found that teen drivers are killing other people in much greater numbers than they are killing themselves. The analysis draws attention to a new facet of the teen driving issue, and shows that teen driving programs need to focus on the impact of others as well. For more information visit

<http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Main/Default.asp?CategoryID=7&ArticleID=424>

News from the USDOT:

New NHTSA Chief Selected

The Bush administration has nominated Nicole Nason as the next chief of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Nason, a lawyer, is the assistant secretary of the Department of Transportation for governmental affairs. If confirmed, Nason would succeed Dr. Jeffrey Runge as NHTSA administrator. Runge left in September to be chief medical officer of the Department of Homeland Security. Jacqueline Glassman has been serving as acting administrator.

FMCSA Research To Examine Wireless Vehicle Communications

Research conducted by the Federal Highway Administration's could pave the way for cars to control traffic signals. The agency is exploring the use of in-car wireless technologies to manage traffic flow. Research concepts involve installing vehicle devices that would enable cars to communicate with the highway and other vehicles. Officials refer to the multiyear project as Vehicle Infrastructure Integration for Mobility. For more information visit <http://www.fcw.com/article92069-01-24-06-Web>

Cell Phone Use On The Rise

NHTSA has released a Traffic Safety Facts Research Note that indicates that cell phone use increased in the United States in 2005, with 6 percent of drivers on hand-held phones in 2005 nationwide compared to 5 percent in 2004. The results are based on a National Occupant Protection Use Survey. For more information visit <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809967.pdf>

NHTSA Releases 2004 Traffic Safety Report

NHTSA has released its Traffic Safety Facts 2004, a compilation of motor vehicle crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System. For more information visit <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSFAnn/TSF2004.pdf>

International Traffic Safety News:

Is Adaptive Cruise Control The Answer To Traffic Control?

Cars fitted with "adaptive cruise control" (or ACC) could help ease traffic congestion on motorways according to new computer simulations by physicists in Germany. Researchers at the Technical University in Dresden found that congestion could be dramatically reduced even if just a few cars on the motorway use ACC. According to some experts, ACC could help in reducing traffic jams in countries where building new roads is not an option. Read the full article at <http://www.physicsweb.org/articles/news/10/1/10/1>

Safety Advocates Reissue Call For Lower BAC Laws In The UK

Road safety experts have issued fresh calls for the UK blood alcohol limit to be lowered after the latest figures showed that an 'unacceptable' number of motorists were caught driving over the limit during the Christmas period. The results of a four-week crackdown over the festive period show that of 133,136 drivers tested, a total of 9,275 (6.9%) tested positive.